



For Immediate Release
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BAUCUS, SNOWE CALL ON USTR TO EMPHASIZE SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

Finance Members Request USTR to Designate Top Staff to Focus on Small Business Trade Issues, Domestic Job Creation

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and senior Member Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) yesterday sent a letter to U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ron Kirk asking USTR to designate an Assistant U.S. Trade Representative to focus on small business priorities.

“Small businesses are the lifeblood of Montana’s – and America’s – economy,” said Baucus. **“This economic recession has forced small businesses to close their doors and lay off workers. We can and must do more to help them and that’s why it is critical Ambassador Kirk ensures small business exports get the highest levels of attention within USTR. Today’s news is an important step in the right direction and a clear sign of progress. Together, we will work hard to open new and existing markets to small business exports and create essential jobs here at home.”**

“With less than one percent of America’s small businesses currently exporting, we must ensure that more small firms realize the numerous benefits of international trade,” said Senator Snowe. **“As Ranking Member of the Senate Small Business Committee, I have seen firsthand the vital boost exporting can give to growing our nation’s small businesses. As such, I have long advocated for an Assistant USTR for Small Business to guarantee that our nation’s smallest entrepreneurs are given the highest priority when formulating trade policy, and I appreciate the work Chairman Baucus and Small Business Committee Chair Mary Landrieu have done to further these efforts.”**

The Senate Finance Committee oversees USTR and has sole jurisdiction over international trade.

The full text of the letter is printed below.

January 12, 2010

The Honorable Ronald Kirk
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Kirk:

These difficult economic times have affected workers and businesses throughout Montana, Maine, and the United States. Hard-working Americans have lost their jobs as global demand shriveled, and innumerable small businesses have been forced to close their doors. We understand that the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) is working to soften the effects of this economic recession by opening and expanding new and current markets to U.S. goods and services. And at the White House Jobs Summit on December 3, 2009, President Obama made clear that we must increase American exports to spur job creation here at home. As the administration focuses on U.S. export growth, we urge you to designate an Assistant United States Trade Representative to address the trade-related needs of our small businesses.

Small businesses are the backbone of the U.S. economy. Montana and Maine alone have more than 260,000 small businesses. And in 2007, small businesses accounted for more than half of America's non-farm, private gross domestic product. Yet only 240,000 small firms – or less than 1 percent of our nation's small businesses – currently export. Although these 240,000 small businesses account for 97 percent of all exporting firms in our country, they account for just 29 percent of all U.S. exports. And this number has decreased over the past 10 years. We must do more to increase small business exports. Increasing these exports will create sorely needed American jobs and could significantly reduce the trade deficit.

USTR must play a crucial role in increasing small business exports. And we believe designating an Assistant United States Trade Representative to work with and for small businesses is vital to ensuring that the needs and concerns of small businesses are addressed. This advocate must focus on removing those trade barriers and opening those markets that are most meaningful for our small businesses.

We applaud your efforts to help grow the number of small businesses that participate in the global marketplace, and look forward to working closely with you to address the needs of America's small businesses as we help American companies emerge from this protracted recession stronger than before.

Sincerely,

Max Baucus
Chair
Senate Finance Committee

Olympia J. Snowe
Ranking Member
Senate Small Business Committee

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